

**For Immediate Release**  
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## **The Southeast Indiana Trails to Freedom Driving Tour Kicks-off with Three Special Events**

INDIANAPOLIS – The research is done, the driving tours have been laid out and on June 30, the celebration of Indiana's role in the Underground Railroad begins with the first of three kick-off events for the Southeast Indiana Trails to Freedom driving tour. The events will take place at the tour's three "gateway sites," Historic Eleutherian College, the Carnegie Center for Art and History and the Levi Coffin State Historic Site.

### **June 30 – Eleutherian College**

The first event will take place at Historic Eleutherian College on Friday, June 30, beginning at 12:30 p.m. The celebration will honor the Underground Railroad conductors that operated in Jefferson County in pre-Civil War period of history.

Kabhir Shareef, an actor from Indianapolis, will present a reenactment of George DeBaptiste, a Black abolitionist and businessman, and his Underground Railroad activities from Georgetown, and African American settlement in Madison, Indiana, out to Eleutherian College in Lancaster, Indiana. DeBaptiste referred to the college as "The New England Settlement who operated a good station."

Representatives from the state and county levels will give a brief presentation on this project, the college and the restoration efforts happening there. Visitors will also be able to enjoy live music and refreshments during the event.

### **July 7 – The Carnegie Center for Art and History**

The second event will take place at the Carnegie Center for Art and History in New Albany, Indiana, on Friday, July 7, from 3 to 5 p.m. Grilled hot dogs, lemonade and ice cream will be available, free of charge, throughout the event.

Visitors can listen as storyteller and author, Judith Owens-Lalude presents *The Long Walk*, an interactive story told in the first- person about a nine-year-old girl, Wednesday, and her Mama who decide to run away from their owner, Master Ben. Representatives from the three gateway sites along with the honorable James Garner, Mayor of New Albany will make a few brief remarks before the "Freedom Ambassadors," young children from the community, read selected stories from the driving tour booklet that will be available at each of the gateway sites.

Visitors will also enjoy music from the Deep River Songbirds, a men's gospel quartet.

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### **July 14 – Levi Coffin State Historic Site**

The third and final event will take place on July 14 at both the Art Gallery at Indiana University's East campus in Richmond, Indiana from 6 to 8 p.m. and at the Levi Coffin State Historic Site in Fountain City, Indiana, from 7:30 to 9 p.m.

Visitors can start their evening at the Art Gallery with the opening of "Threads of Strength and Fortitude: Penny Sisto's Slavery Quilts," an art exhibit featuring artist Penny Sisto's Underground Railroad fabric art works. The exhibit will also showcase the work of several local artists the have pieces relating to the Coffin House.

Live music, refreshments and a short program on the Southeast Indiana Trails to Freedom will also be held at the gallery.

Then visitors should head to the Levi Coffin House, which came to be known as the "Grand Central Station" of the Underground Railroad, for candlelight tours of the home from 7:30 to 9 p.m.

For more information about the Southeast Indiana Trails to Freedom driving tour or the Indiana Underground Railroad Coalition, visit [www.SoutheastIndianaTrailstoFreedom.com](http://www.SoutheastIndianaTrailstoFreedom.com). The Indiana Underground Railroad Initiative is administered through the Indiana Department of Natural Resources' Division of Historic Preservation and Archaeology, (317) 232-1646.

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**\*Editors Note:** Photos available upon request from [mburrows@dnr.in.gov](mailto:mburrows@dnr.in.gov)

### **The Indiana Underground Railroad Coalition**

Representatives from 19 Indiana counties formed the Indiana Underground Railroad Coalition to draw attention to Indiana's role in the Underground Railroad, and to develop exhibits and tours highlighting Indiana's connection to the Underground Railroad. The coalition is currently made up of representatives from Bartholomew, Clark, Decatur, Dearborn, Floyd, Franklin, Harrison, Jackson, Jefferson, Jennings, Ohio, Ripley, Rush, Switzerland and Wayne counties.